

CHRISTIAN DRAMA



JANUARY 1951

ONE SHILLING

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BELLMAN'S BIT

THE Editor makes no apology for a certain repetitiveness in the articles presented in this issue. If a thing's worth saying it's worth saying twice and we have the Bellman's authority for the statement:
"What I tell you three times is true".

The reason it is an important issue is that the writers are, with one exception, members of the Society actively engaged in amateur production of Religious Drama. All the points raised demand the serious study of members before the Council meeting on February 23.

So may we urge readers to follow Humpty Dumpty's advice—begin at the beginning, go on till you come to the end and then stop. Stop? Only long enough to say "Can I write the play each article by implication demands?" And then, above the din of 1,500 typewriters, begged, borrowed or . . . acquired, may the Editor wish you all a happy New Year and —Many inventions?

KABIR SAITH

*He is the true saint who can reveal the form
of the Formless to the eye of the simple.*

The Rev. L. Hayes is Assistant Industrial Chaplain to the Diocese of Sheffield. This article is therefore in the nature of a despatch from the front line.

DRAMA AND EVANGELISM

By L. HAYES

IT IS of real importance if Christian men and women are hoping for good drama that will be evangelistic, that they study afresh the true meaning of Evangelism. In spite of much evidence from men who have launched out into great fields of specifically evangelistic work, there is still to-day a tendency with many people to think that if only they can find the right trick, press the right switch, turn some previously undiscovered tap—discover some new method in Evangelistic technique—men and women will crowd to hear the Message and will flock into our Churches. This tendency results from a failure to grasp the nature of the gap that separates the Church from the majority of our countrymen. That gap will not be bridged quickly or easily. We need radical thinking and radical remedies.

If these assertions are true, then Drama must come under review in the rethinking and reshaping of our approach. From all sides, though not from all people, one receives the impression that the Church has abstracted itself from the world rather than be the leaven and the salt in the world. Little wonder that Drama written and presented by Christians has been removed, in the main, from the real worries and cares of the world—that, in fact, Christian Drama has reflected the irrelevance of the Church.

Yet in Evangelistic work in Great Britain, one is not talking to completely hostile people. I am using the word "Evangelistic" to mean an approach to those outside organized religion and not a speaking to groups of Church people. The figures given in *Puzzled People* (Gollancz) which is a book of conclusions by Mass Observation on a London Borough, showed that although not more than one person in ten is at all closely associated with any of the Churches, and about two-thirds never, or practically never, go to Church, yet the majority, four out of five women, and two out of three men, give at least verbal assent to the possibility of there being a God, and most of the rest express doubt rather than disbelief. It is the Church, organized religion, that is suspect. Yet our Christian Drama is written from a greater understanding of the Church than of the world to which it has tried to speak. The gap that exists must be jumped, and if the gap is so great that the jump is almost like a crossing to a foreign country, the ambassador or agent must learn the language of both sides, which means thinking and not just talking in foreign terms. The Eternal Gospel is relevant to all people in all places and Christian Drama has to re-interpret the Message of the Gospel in terms "understood of the people". The best way to think in the terms of other people is to share their lives and so, first of all, there must be an identification of

Christians with their fellow-men, a breaking down of all barriers that can possibly be broken down. Christian dramatists must present the problems of men with whom they try to identify themselves. This is not to say that each play is a "problem play" as we have come to understand that term, but that real life, truly presented, is all problems.

But here we must retrace our steps. There is a great danger that seekers after Christian Drama will fall in line with those who want, and expect to find, quick and simple ways of evangelizing the masses and so misunderstand both Drama and Evangelism. Evangelism is the "preaching" of the Gospel, which means "good news" and news is for people, for persons. When we talk of making the Gospel relevant to people's lives, what we really mean, though we seldom admit it, is that we have not made the people's lives known to ourselves—we have not lived the life of the persons we wish to evangelize. The very nature of Drama itself gives us a clue and a great ray of hope. Drama can only survive, even exist, because contact is made between the Dramatist and his audience. Unless the Dramatist speaks the same language as his audience, presents characters immediately accepted, if not wholly understood, gives pictures of a life with which others can identify themselves, what is produced cannot be called Drama. Does this explain the failure of much religious drama to touch those outside our Churches?

But more needs to be said. A theological misunderstanding underlies some attempts to evangelize the modern world, attempts exemplified by bad religious drama. It is concerned with the very word "religious". To the average worker religion has become something for those who like it, those who feel that way, and so the religious person has been thought of as a separated person, one abstracted from life. There has grown up a "religious" side and a "secular" side; a spiritual part and a material part, Sunday attitude and week-day attitude. All this has amounted to a supposed cleavage between this world and the "other" world, between earth and heaven, and finally the false separation has been made between the things that matter to us now and the things that can be left to those fanciful enough to think about them, to the dreamers and unreal people of this world. Drama, too, for those seeking to use it in Evangelism, became a matter of halos, white-robed figures, sometimes wearing wings, characters in ancient clothes speaking Biblical phrases and stories for children.

Some may say this could only refer to old-style religious drama and would be a caricature of most modern drama. To a point I would agree, but the truth is that the best of Christian Drama, because it is very modern, has been written and presented long after the gap between the world and the Church has developed. Despite efforts to use the modern medium of wireless, the plays have not lessened the misunderstandings of the relation of the "spiritual" to the "material", even though one does not suppose the authors have an unsound theology. Moreover much of the best modern religious drama will not be understood by, and is mostly not seen or heard by the vast majority of our working population, which is the part of our community most outside "organized religion".

S. Paul was not making a distinction between "material" and "spiritual" when he spoke of "sarx" and "pneuma", but between the things of God and the things of Satan, between good and evil. This means we need to look at all the material things around us, our social, economic and political activities and in and through them see the things of God and the things of evil. In Our Lord's life, we cannot find the false distinction between material and spiritual—at Cana, Capernaum or on the Cross. He was God and Man and in His Person we see the right perspective on the things of the world, that He was in all things doing the will of God, bringing material things into their right place, making them the means, the channels, the vehicles of God's Plan. In ecclesiastical language we would say that this attitude is sacramental.

Drama for us, then, concerns not only angels, praying figures and Biblical characters but soldiers of to-day, sailors of 1951, income-tax assessors, young married couples, harlots, the maimed, the poor, and the rich, the divorced and the outcasts—we need not extend the list—let us just say everyone, but with the proviso that if we do, then we proclaim categorically, as we admit privately and theoretically, that Drama is life, ordinary, normal, modern, as well as extraordinary, abnormal and ancient, day-to-day life. Since we believe that Christ came to fulfil all in our lives then woe betide us if we leave to-day's events, atmosphere and problems out of our presentation of Christ in Drama. What we are pleading for, then, is that Christ be depicted in Drama as He is depicted in the Gospels, with people in their everyday routine and occupations and real-life problems. To use the words "secular occupations" would again make us beg the question, because these occupations are not worldly in the sense that they are unspiritual and non-religious. It is in and through these jobs and tussles that men must come to see something of God's Redemption, God's will for them, and it is round these that Drama must be written. On the surface it will not look as though plays written by the Christian are different from many other plays that people see, but if there is to be "a permeation of those regions with the power of the New Life" men must see in dramatic presentations characters living their lives by viewing problems from the Christian angle, with a "Christian slant on things", or see life ruined by the failure to understand God's meaning for this world of ours.

Some readers may feel this article is impractical and hopelessly idealistic. It is true that what it proposes may take a great time to come to fruition, but when we are talking of evangelizing the people of our land we are dreaming of far-off events, yet that does not make the assertions, nor the necessities arising from them, wrong. The road may be long but to be travelling on it, if it is the right road, is the main point, and the knowledge of that gives hope and impetus.

Even if we agree with the Report on Evangelism that "Though all the piety in the world cannot compensate for bad drama, nor for bad acting and production, yet Zilsach and Oberammergau are constant reminders of the evangelistic power of technical excellence wedded to genuine piety", the important question that remains is "Who is being Evangelized?" Who

goes to Oberammergau? Certainly not the people I come in contact with in factories day after day. There may be a wedding of technics and piety but certainly not of the Church and the great working mass of our population. One cannot, moreover, decentralize such drama and spectacle, and if one could the working man is not going to any central place to see "Religious Drama". Another question is then posed—how can we take Drama to him? Evangelism must mean going out to meet people—it must mean a missionary Church. If Drama is to be an evangelistic power, it too must go out to meet people. Another important point is that it must be first-rate. The further people are from the Church, the higher, not the lower, standard they must have presented to them. There must be no thought of tenth-rate E.N.S.A. standards for the front-line boys. I myself like the military analogy for the far-off "frontier" work of the Church. The Church's front-line is thinly held and poorly supported. We must learn how to popularize, in the best sense, and to reproduce, without shoddy mass-production, the best we have back at base for use at the front. Can there be any modern counter-part to the medieval travelling players? Already plays have been presented by a Sheffield factory, an experiment meant to be and proving to be as beneficial for the players as for the audience. A band of players, also in Sheffield, have taken a Christmas Play—*The Ox and the Ass*—to a large modern public house. The overall impression of this latter effort is that there is a great danger of fostering precisely what we want to avoid—that one is trying to make people pious, rather like selling the "War-cry", only far more attractive, time-passing, and artistic. We need plays about ordinary life in which Christian actions, Christian themes, Christian beliefs are seen in their relevance and force. Would it not be better to present and have a discussion on "No trees in the street" or "Accolade", or "Robert's Wife" than to present a so-called religious play that people would not talk about. Just as we have to explain, expound and examine the life of Christ, so we should need explanation and exposition, enforced by discussion, if men and women pictorially present situations in which characters act and make decisions because of their allegiance to Christ, or in which they make a mess of their lives and destroy personal relations because they leave God out of it.

Religious Drama has inevitably tended to present personal and individual response to God's acts of Creation and Redemption, whereas a great need to-day is to find whether the "Christian ethic of individuals can be related to group morality". This question is at the time of writing being dealt with in a B.B.C. Sunday Evening Service under the title "The Modern Man". A kindred question raised in the series is the need for laymen to work out the content of Christian obedience. It is precisely the Christian's obedience in the secular order that must be the theme of Christian Drama, and modern man is found in groups that are not specifically Christian groups and in some cases are groups that have grown far away from the Church. Drama, then, to touch modern man, must be set in terms understood by such groups. This means that we need plays about Industry and Industrial Life, about the history of loyalty to such

groups within the industrial setting, about the problems of community and neighbourhood in industrial cities and the new townships resulting from the industrial housing situation. Need I add that these themes will be presenting problems not only of interest to welfare workers and sociologists but understood by the thousands of men and women experiencing them, the majority of whom have not understood the relevance of Christ to them.

The plea, then, is that we may see plays of modern life in which the Christian slant is given on the situations that arise in that life—in which Tom, Dick and Harry of the twentieth century, and mid-century at that, battle their way through to “creative solutions” of the problems facing them, or, if this is too optimistic, at least in which they present the problems in all their complexity and ambiguity, and show the Church as an active body of men and women bringing their contribution to the understanding and settlement of issues in this fast-changing world. There are many dramatists writing plays about modern issues. All we ask is that Christian dramatists will likewise apply their talents to the same issues so that Christian insights may permeate society.

Films do not fall within the scope of this article, but one observation is important. The great majority of our population do not see plays but regularly visit the cinema. To make an impact on the majority would therefore necessitate filming stories and plays (and many plays to-day are filmed) which stand in their own right as good literature and fiction, and which, without necessarily pointing an obvious moral, do depict life with Christian insights and presuppositions.

QUIET WEEK-END

Two Quiet Days have been arranged for R.D.S. members at St Ursula's, Shiswick, from Friday evening until Sunday evening, February 23rd—25th.

The Very Rev. H. E. Ashdown, Provost of Southwark, has kindly consented to lead us.

At the opening of our Summer School at Chichester, Mr Martin Browne said: “the other important event of the R.D.S. year is the Quiet Week-end”, and we believe it is a wonderful opportunity for busy people to come apart and pray together as a Christian family.

If you have not already booked, please apply to the Secretary at the R.D.S. office now. The cost will be about 25/-, payable on arrival.

A PLAY FOR HOLY WEEK

By MARGARET CROPPER

THIS is an attempt to follow up a suggestion made at the Annual General Meeting that there should be one article in *Christian Drama* for beginners in production. So please, experienced producers, turn over to the next article.

The Editor thought that it might be useful to take two short Passion plays, and make them the basis of this article. Of these two plays, *According to the Scriptures* by Elisabeth Heward is definitely a play to be acted in Church; and *The House of the Other Mary*, by Ethelred Waddy, is a play which though it could be done in Church, could also be acted in the Youth Club on a Good Friday evening, or in a Village Hall. Two short plays were chosen, because the longer Passion Plays demand more skilled technique in producer and players, to sustain the tension and movement of the Passion. Both these plays are for small companies so that they could be performed in two or three places by the same company without much difficulty of transport. There are no complicated properties and the setting is very simple. They could both be used instead of a sermon in Church, indeed *According to the Scriptures* was so used last year in a Church in the country, and in a town Church. The preparation for the production, of course, begins in the prayers of the producer, and those who are planning the play; and for a Passion Play the first spiritual requisite is humility. "I never can love Him enough", the Abbé Huvelin used to say, and we never can love Jesus enough to produce or play the glorious and terrible drama of His Passion as it should be played. But the humble soul will be ready to accept what the Holy Spirit will certainly give.

I have found that, in saying prayers with the cast of a Passion Play, silence is a help to them; not many words should be used, perhaps some of the words in the play may be offered to God, or some hymn that is being used in the production, some verses of the Bible, something that joins the prayer to the play. But we must learn too (as the Editor said in writing on the Chichester School), not so much to pray about the play as to pray the play. Rehearsal is prayer, and prayer is rehearsal in Religious Drama.

When you come to cast the play look for a sort of dignity which will serve you better than any emotional fervour, a dignity which can sustain the intense feeling without cheapening it. Look for voices as much as for faces, especially in *According to the Scriptures*, and look for understanding spirits, people of imagination, who know something about what they are going to convey. If you have players with a certain amount of technical skill, cast them for the parts where it will be most needed, not necessarily the longest part but the parts that require technique the most.

Now for the plays. *According to the Scriptures* requires two men, and four women. It was played adequately with three women where the narrow entrance to the Chancel had to be considered, but the author's

intention is to have four women. It should not be attempted unless the players are willing to learn about speaking the Bible, and the producer has heard or studied enough about Choral Speaking to be able to help them. For the message of the play is offered in the spoken words of the Bible, with very little movement, and great economy of gesture; and the point of it lies in the beautiful speaking of the Bible, in the variety of speaking tones and pace, and in the careful use of the movement indicated by the author. It was loved and appreciated by a real village congregation, but it needs expressive speaking voices to get it across. The centre of the play is the processional cross, if this cross is large enough to dominate the scene. For my own production we made a rather larger wooden cross standing firmly in a socket on its own base. There are no other properties in the play at all, and the scene is the chancel steps. Besides the players, there is also a Reader of the narrative, reading from the pulpit, who must rehearse carefully with the players, as his words are dovetailed into theirs. The men in the production wore cassocks as the basis of their costume. Over these we put chasuble-like straight black garments, but the play could be played simply in cassocks for the men. The women wore simple straight robes, blue and silver, that had belonged to an angel set.

It is very important in this play for the producer to work out the movements step by step, and with real exactitude, for these movements are the ceremonial movements of an act of worship, and if they are muddled the play will lose the quiet dignity which is its character. It is also vital that the timing, pace, and intensity of the speaking should be varied to avoid monotony, and that the players should shun the "Bible voice" with its booming quality, and speak their words as they would speak great poetry. It is a help to let the cast get familiar with the rhythms of the verses that are spoken chorally, before attempting to speak them with the movements.

The play demands a singer, who may be, but need not be, one of the cast.

The other play, *In the House of the Other Mary*, is a realistic play, grouped round the household of the Other Mary, the mother of James and Josés, taking place on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, the Sabbath, and Easter Morning in four short scenes with the same set: the House of the Other Mary. It requires four women, a boy, and three men. It would be a help if the part of Mary could be taken by a player of some experience, otherwise this play is suitable for absolute beginners, and the set, costumes, and other properties are very simple.

It has, of course, the fundamental difficulty of all realistic Passion plays that the main drama is reported rather than acted, and if this is not to spell a sort of frustration to the audience a great deal of care will have to be taken to bring every sort of variety of pace, grouping, and tone of voice to play, and to get the characterization clear and definite. There are some good contrasts in the play which should be used to the full, between the faithfulness of Mary and Cleopas, and the narrow caution of Amos and Hannah, between the youthful reactions of Josés, and the older steadfastness of his Father and Mother, between the wretchedness of Leah, and the comfort of Mary's ministering.

Directions about costumes and properties are given clearly in the play, I have always found either William Hole's or Elsie Anna Wood's pictures very helpful as to Palestinian costume. A curtain set is all that is needed. Good lighting and a competent electrician may often be borrowed from a nearby Dramatic Society. Dramatic Societies are often very generous in this respect to producers of Religious Drama.

Take real trouble to have everything quiet and smooth-going in the place where your characters are dressing and making up. Tell them that it matters that the atmosphere from which they come should be a quiet peaceful one, not filled with chat about this and that. Leave time but not too much time for your characters to get ready; a long wait before this kind of play is difficult for beginners. This means that all costumes and props and make-up must be absolutely ready and in order for the players. Take great pains with the make-up in a Passion Play; bad make-up is a specially distasteful form of irreverence. Here again I have often borrowed help from good nearby Dramatic Societies, and have found them ready to help.

Just a word about the audience in a Passion Play. They should be invited to take their part in the play as an act of worship, and it helps them to join in hymn and prayer at the beginning—but do not break up the atmosphere of your play by letting the audience sing a hymn between the scenes. All music *during* the play must be part of the performance, and the Houselights in hall or Church should never be raised especially in these short plays. And do not spoil your appeal by asking for money at any point in the performance. It seems unnecessary to say this, but I have seen Passion plays ruined in this way. If you must have a collection take it as the people disperse, and do not mention it during the performance!

Copies of both these plays are obtainable from the R.D.S. library. *According to the Scripture* is in typescript.

SHEFFIELD TO BRISTOL

A Report from P. KEILY

FOR almost two years now an attempt has been made to work a shuttle service for religious drama between the two Dioceses of Sheffield and Bristol. To make a *one* year report on the double situation is somewhat complicated owing to the producer's extraneous engagement with C.M.S. and "Gates of Hell" last autumn.

However, there has now been in existence—off and on for seven years—a group in Sheffield which calls itself the C.C.P. These letters stand for "Christian Community Players", and unfortunately have nothing to do with Carter Paterson. Transport is one of the worst difficulties. The group is *not* a dramatic society, but struggles to tour the city in frequently

dire conditions, with no money and literally very little but a sense of community and a belief in the possibility of demonstrating the Christian Faith through drama.

In September 1949, the Christian Community Players were rehearsed in Charles Williams' *House by the Stable* with the *Strolling Clerk from Paradise* as a curtain raiser. Owing to the fact that their producer was going to leave them to "stew in their own juice", it was necessary to duplicate (even triplicate) most of the parts—or the proposed winter tour would certainly have failed some of its dates. A time-table of elaborate texture was worked out for October rehearsals with the stage managers in Sheffield, while the producer worked in London for C.M.S. The difficulties were appalling—everyone having far too many other commitments, as well as the inevitable problem of health. Nevertheless, on a certain date in November, the producer descended upon Sheffield for a dress rehearsal. This was a *terrible* evening, with 3 layers of folk to get through—and inevitably a frightful history of excuse for having omitted to carry out the scheduled time-table. But the first show was played that week-end, and the so-called "tour" went out—without the producer doing more than make a further descent in January to see two different castes in action.

At the same time the more recently formed Sheffield "Panel of Advisers" still struggled (and continues to struggle), with its activities. This organization is a small group of people—most of whom are members of the Christian Community Players—who are willing to help over-worked clergy with their parish plays. They meet together once a month under the admirable chairmanship of Miss Mary Hardcastle, to report on their different productions. In these meetings an outlet is provided for sharing each others' agonies, and keeping sane by seeing the funny side of the frequently maddening situation.

Though the work of the Panel is of an extremely humble sort, it is an attempt to make the job of religious drama continue in its native element, and slightly more "under its own steam" than previously. Despite its primitive quality, a recent flying visit to one of the meetings of this Panel, has convinced me that it is a scheme worth fostering. Listening to the reports of the members' rehearsals and problems, it is increasingly brought to light that the *total* ignorance of the folk they are handling would be quite unbelievable to anyone who has not actually faced the situation. Equally the need to foster and encourage this idea of a *body* of producers, is made clearer.

Returning to the end of 1949 and beginning of 1950; the R.D. Adviser-cum-Producer, had to get underweigh by January 9th, with a production of *Murder in the Cathedral* in the East End of Bristol. This was a sample of inter-denominational co-operation. It was also a proof of the value of a time-table planned well in advance. By leaving the *Gates of Hell* for two week-ends, and holding auditions in Bristol before Christmas, certain nights were booked regularly for rehearsal from January till March. Over and over again one learns that this step is the only way to prevent the hundred and one other activities being allowed to intervene. It also meant, on this occasion, that one regular night could be set aside for

rehearsing a reading from the *Man Born to be King* in the parish where Bristol had done *Go Down Moses* a year earlier.

Murder in the Cathedral may begin to seem an unoriginal choice. The fact remains—judging by reactions which have come in since—that for the slummier end of Bristol it was an experience which appears to have left its mark. For the folk in it, simply learning such words is an enriching experience, and on this occasion the magnificent co-operation meant a real vitality. Doubtless it was not a subtle performance, but it *was* a vigorous one, and better still—one which held its audience of previously suspicious East Bristolians, causing them to go out in complete silence on one or two occasions.

Redfield was the constituency of Sir Stafford Cripps. Quoting from the *Church of England Newspaper* of April 6th: "The men and women who live there are tough, outspoken, and a little suspicious of their fellow citizens from the aristocratic Clifton quarter . . . But *Murder in the Cathedral* performed movingly by their own people held them silent and attentive throughout." . . . "It has demonstrated once again that working-class people *are* able to appreciate drama that is generally considered to be above their heads".

On the eve of Palm Sunday, the other group gave its rehearsed reading to an audience which included the Bishop. And on Palm Sunday the R.D. Producer went back to Sheffield to plan and start the summer season of productions.

These included: R. H. Ward's newly revised version of *Holy Family* with the Christian Community Players; one parish production of a new short play by Joyce Biddell; one parish production of the Dorothy Sayers' reading; one school group playing *The Deluge*; and also a course of "talks" on producing, and a series of evenings doing choric speaking with members of the mixed association of Boys and Girls clubs.

The new one-act play by Joyce Biddell was also produced with the Christian Community Players in a small theatre as a "curtain-raiser" to *Holy Family*. Whereas this was an event of disastrous texture, the interesting thing is that the same play, when performed with a *totally* raw parish group, was a real success. In the parochial group folk just *were* the parts, and the background did not and could not, even attempt to be theatrical.

All this happened in the summer months. Since then *Holy Family* has played certain dates—including Sheffield Cathedral—while I get on with two parish productions in Bristol. It is hoped to bring it to London in the Festival—bearing in mind that the cast is composed of working folk, that finance is nil, and that the production is necessarily of the plainest.

I must also mention a most stimulating and exciting lecture given by Mr Oliver Wilkinson this season in Sheffield, which I hope may bear fruit in a particular parish.

SUMMER SCHOOL 1951

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, YORK, AUGUST 11th to 20th

Please make a note of this NOW, and send your name to the office as soon as you like.

Will you also do your utmost to tell others about the School, through notices in church magazines and posters on college notice boards, etc.? We should be most grateful for the co-operation of our readers in this way and we are particularly anxious to encourage young men and women, for whom there will be reduced fees.

Where fees are the stumbling block, advance planning and saving is often the remedy. A church or club or society can often help its members with the fees, and surely there can be no more valuable training for a producer, actor or playwright?

Miss J. Powell, School Secretary, R.D.S. office, will be glad to receive names and addresses of individuals and bodies whom you think would be interested. Application forms and further details should be ready in early Spring and will be sent to all whose names have been received.

WHAT I LOOK FOR FROM
THE SOCIETY

By C. MURRAY ANDREWS

THIS was a title the Editor suggested for an article. What a challenge!

We have already so much, and yet, year by year the possibilities from such a society increase in every direction.

The revival of religious drama in the twentieth century is a great responsibility and adventure, now that the old ways and traditions in thought and action are being flung into the maelstrom in a world of unprecedented upheavals.

In this coming New Year, we shall again "Ring out the old, ring in the New" . . . "ring in the Christ that is to be," and we look to the society to help ring the bells of every cathedral, church and chapel; in factories where man is massed together with machines; in towns; in village pubs where there is talk of politics, and the hard sweet way of the land; in cottage homes. Have we not now to march straight into the heart of all this pulsing life and ring the great peal of the spiritual unity of mankind?

The society is blest in having amongst its members people of profound wisdom, skilled craftsmen and producers, and the simple folk "who pipe but as the linnet sings," all working together for a united aim. It looks as if we should need every man to come forth more strongly yet to face the god of Power that slowly but surely creeps over the horizon of the world, ready to hold it in his grasp.

To meet the challenge, we have the instrument of the drama, and yet, people constantly say "Why religious drama?" or turn away with scorn with the remark "Museum pieces." Why? Is there something amiss with the drama or with religion? Does not the society exist to create plays of such reality, the very stuff of life, that these comments would become impossible? The Reverend Hugh Ross Williamson would have only the religious play religious drama. Does not that rather suggest weakness in the art of drama? How many people dare call themselves fitted for the work? Isn't the fact of acting a "converting" process? Isn't it also true that some theologians find, by acting words they have read for years from the reading desk, that a new vitality and vigour comes to them?

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new . . . And God fulfils himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world." The old Medieval plays still show us true beauty, serenity and joy. What greater religious drama than "Everyman"? Religion was so much part of the everyday medieval life, that their buildings, decorations, clothes and plays, all contributed to the joy of their convictions.

There is a crying need for authors to-day who can get right down under the skin of this pulverizing, soul-destroying materialism, and show us how, and if, it can be used as part and parcel of life, or if it must go for the lack of joy.

We must not weaken and sentimentalize Christian drama by writing in the archaic language and symbols of another age. To do so shows a fear to face present issues, instead of using the material of our time. A certain preacher once told his congregation to be careful to avoid people of un-Christian principle, lest they become contaminated! Is there not a danger for this situation to creep into the writing of religious plays? So, more and more, we look to the Society to take the stuff of modern life and use it until "All the sons of God shout together for joy!" For what is religious drama but an age old form to express man's joy and sorrow in his search for God?

AS OTHERS SEE US

"They're three minutes late in starting already."

"That's bad religion for you, if you like!"

ANOTHER WIG ON THE GREEN

Dear Editor,

I congratulate you on securing within your contributory net so distinguished an author as "Anon"—whose connection with the Legion family will be known to your readers.

What an admirable letter has come from that fertile pen. May I support every word of "Anon's" letter about the cover design which has recently visited your paper?

The progress of art has left a trail of corpses in its wake—the corpses of those buffoons who have seen fit to jeer at the artist who has been found to be ahead of his time. At the risk of joining the hooligans I would like to make the following observations.

Contemporary art, when it approaches the hinterland of Christian faith and worship, should be mindful that most of us who profess the Christian faith have the roots of our belief deeply set in our childhood days. Therefore the force and power of association naturally predisposes us in favour of those representations which seek to lift our gaze beyond transient "reality" towards the eternal "vision" which we hope will one day take the place of this world's care and toil. That is why the representation of the Shepherd, for example, fills us with intimations of "Another world than this". We see so much agony and frustration, we know that Our Lord drained that bitter cup to the dregs. But surely the ultimate aim of Religious Drama is to help us to lift up our hearts and find strength and consolation and to be born again in the Spirit? Only by so doing do the manifold sorrows of the world become bearable at all. We do not need the artist to tell us again what we know so well already.

Surely the least that contemporary artists can do is to "tread softly" when they approach the Sanctuary—the very centre of our belief? Is it really necessary to depict the face of Jesus Christ (with or without an explanatory foot-note) as though His beloved visage needs a major operation in opthalmic surgery? I am sorry to seem unappreciative and dull-witted but there must come a moment when someone should protest and I think that moment has now come.

I am sure that your readers would be interested to hear what the artist in question has to say about his idea of Our Lord. I, for one, would be vastly intrigued. Meanwhile, need we continue to stand the onslaught of your present cover every time your otherwise admirable paper appears?

Yours, etc.,

ANOTHER EDITOR.

[Other letters having expressed similar views it may well be that the cover will be changed. We asked the artist for a note about the design but he made a firm and justifiable refusal to say more than the design itself says.—ED.]

OVERSEAS

The good news comes from the Diocese of Melbourne of an impressive production of *Go Down, Moses*, produced, under the auspices of the Youth Organization Committee, by the Rev. Robert Dann, who attended a R.D.S. School at Birmingham in 1947. At the end of July 1950 he went to Sydney to conduct a 10-day school of Religious Drama for which 130 youth leaders of the Sydney diocese enrolled.

We hear now with great pleasure of the formation of an Australian Religious Drama Society.

AND HOME

Though not in any way formally connected with R.D.S. the Reading Christian Arts Festival, held from November 22nd—December 2nd, with its wide range of Religious Drama, merits special mention as an example of what can be done in the way of complete co-operation among the Christian Churches working to the Glory of God. It was presented as a united effort on the part of Reading Christians to introduce their fellow townspeople to the great contribution which the Christian Spirit has made and is making in painting, sculpture, music, drama, literature and the film.

NEWS OF THE OTHERS

STAR TURN ONE

Huddersfield.

The Huddersfield Y.M.C.A. Players (Senior and Junior Groups, have recently experienced a double thrill—the presentation of a Religious Drama which achieved a remarkable high standard of acting, which was at the same time a great religious experience.

Under the expert guidance of Carina Robins, who gave herself utterly to the task, *The Zeal of Thy House* began to mean more than any other production, within a week or so of commencing rehearsal. To witness the rising sense of purpose in the heart and mind of each member of the cast was itself a moving experience, and one wondered whether it could be sustained until the week of the public performances. It was not only sustained but achieved a quality in performance which captured every audience, and many who came to see a play went away sharing in an experience.

The co-operation received from business people, and womenfolk in the churches, meant successfully overcoming problems of lighting and wardrobe, which in the beginning presented difficulties. The archangel's wings

had to be seen to be believed. The willing assistance of the Choirs of the College of the Resurrection and of the Almondbury Grammar School in the singing of the special music added a character to the production without which the atmosphere of every performance would have suffered.

The production was sponsored by the Yorkshire Union of Y.M.C.A.'s and was intended primarily as a demonstration of what can be achieved by this medium of evangelism. Representatives of Y.M.C.A.'s throughout the county came to the performances, and there is no doubt that hopes of the responsible officials have been fulfilled.

A vision has been seen of what can be done in the field of Religious Drama, and we confidently expect to see many more ventures in the future.

WILLIAM ELLIS,
General Secretary, Huddersfield Y.M.C.A.

It was a great joy to us in the Yorkshire United Independent College, Bradford, to have Carina Robins with us on Tuesday, October 24th, and on the same day for some of us to see one of the performances of Dorothy Sayers' *The Zeal of Thy House* which Carina has been producing for the Yorkshire Union of Y.M.C.A.'s at Huddersfield during the week October 23rd to 29th. The performances were held in the Temperance Hall—a name and a building enough to damn anything. But in spite of the Hall and the canned music the production was marked by an ability and a distinction which made participation in the play a memorable experience. We really were inside the growing Cathedral of Canterbury. The cast were Y.M.C.A. lads, and to those who live in the West Riding what came out in the performance in the way of manifesting the theme of the glory of God was astonishing and moving in its greatness. I find it difficult to criticize at all—perhaps the only thing that I could say is that a certain shyness in expressing the scandal in the Cathedral may have inhibited a note of joy in the victory of God through it all. The audience on the night we were there was not worthy of the occasion: but it is to be hoped that the financial result is not disappointing enough to prevent the Yorkshire Union of Y.M.C.A.'s continuing this experiment. It is difficult to win a response in the West Riding but when it comes it is worth all the effort, and Carina has done big things for Religious Drama in Huddersfield.

H. CUNLIFFE-JONES.

And Miss Henzie Raeburn writes :

I went to see the last performance of "Zeal" at the Temperance Hall, as unlikely a playhouse as you could conceive. It had run for a week and had been in rehearsal for two months under Carina Robins, who had been invited to produce it by the Yorkshire Union of Y.M.C.A.'s.

The production well displayed the value that can lie in Religious

Drama. The play was a good one, and a religious; and the producer had brought it to full life. The impact of her mind on the large cast of young players—about thirty of them, mostly seventeen-year-olds—was quite a revelation. The grave dignity of the watching angels spoke, by its unwavering constancy, of how the producer had relied on the actors to support the play. There was a unity, and a loyalty to the producer, evident in the whole cast; and these were the reasons for the rapt attention of the audience in which I sat.

Technically, there was much to admire as well as to criticize. The aid of local artists was of the greatest value. The background of painted corrugated paper gave a good impression of Norman pillars in stone; the costumes and props were satisfactory. After the performance, all the cast raged about in the wildest spirits: but in the midst of the hubbub their affectionate deference to Carina Robins (who he it noted had been without a voice for two weeks) showed what influence had been working among them. She exercised an affectionate and merry control quite without nervous tension. The players have all technique to learn, and the producer too will develop with experience and experiment; but those who took part in making this show, and those who saw it, will have learned something from Drama and something more from Religion.

Southampton.

[*It is because of the courage of the Wayfarers that the Editor has yielded to office pressure and allowed Southampton a place among the stars.*] The Wayfarers Dramatic Society in *The Deceitful Heart*.

The presentation of a new play is always something of a venture, and Miss Cecily Deverill is to be congratulated on drawing her bow with such strength. Whatever may be said below about the finer points of interpretation and characterization, this production found its mark and is still being discussed by the people of Southampton.

The Deceitful Heart is a new play written by K. M. Baxter. It is specifically a religious play, but being set in the context of the drawing room comedy familiar to the average theatre-goer, it makes contact at once. This does not stop it from rising above its secular cousin, and occasionally it breaks into poetry which lifts the play and the watcher beyond the bounds of common experience. The play is by no means perfect and suffers from too complex a plot and a certain lack of continuity, especially in the second act, but this will no doubt be remedied in revision. Here is a play, however, of a calibre strong enough through its dialogue and wit to break into the West End, and which by its underlying application of Christian absolute presuppositions should be made available for God's use.

No amateur company could hope to give full value to the play, and some of the characterization needs every bit of the skill in interpretation that can be given by "stars". The Wayfarers' production was of the highest amateur standard, and the producer, the cast and the whole company deserve the highest commendation. This is not an attempt to damn with faint praise—let the praise be unstinted! That they did not manage to extract from the

play all that was there, is no more to their discredit than that a hunter should come home second in the Derby. Casting was not in all cases perfect (due largely to circumstances beyond the producer's control) and there was an over-simplification of portrayal of character. As Christianity itself is complex in its simplicity, so is a person's character. These people were so finely drawn by the author (and the plot demanded that they should be so), that the straightforward interpretation given by the actors, carried only part of the conviction needed. Reactions to situations often failed to underline or point their significance, and the apparent motives sometimes appeared inadequate for the consequent actions. No doubt the players themselves, now that the production is over, can see more clearly where they in part failed. Stage technique was of a high order, and the décor was excellent. Every word spoken could be heard and there was not a trace of shoddiness (and what a magnificent fire the electrician produced!). There are many people in Southampton who regard their visit to see this play as a milestone in their dramatic and spiritual education. May the play and the players continue their work.

R.A.

Southampton Daily Echo said:

"WAYFARERS IN NEW PLAY"

It is refreshing to see a play about real people confronted by real problems. Such is K. M. Baxter's *The Deceitful Heart*, which Southampton's Wayfarers Dramatic Society are giving in the Avenue Hall. . . .

Cicely Deverill's sympathetic production is helped by J. Winter Read's meticulous décor—a lesson to other drama groups. How many people remember to change the flowers with the seasons?

A.B.

But *The Prompter*, while giving the actors well-merited praise, adds:

The Deceitful Heart, refreshingly enough, contains material for several plays and in this lies its greatest fault. For by overloading little room is left for developing the characters.

The play shows the difficulties of obtaining spiritual peace in the complexities of modern life as represented by the Matthews Family and their friends. Underlying the timelessness of the theme we find the main characters reflecting familiar Gospel characters—St Peter, Mary Magdalene and perhaps Mary the eternal Mother. This necessitated a looseness of explanation for we never quite grasped how John died; neither were we convinced of Marian's promiscuous behaviour or Clement's exhibitionism. Patricia Cain and Phillip Graham in these two parts completely suggested their integrity but failed with the flesh and the devil. This was no personal fault for their soliloquies were complex and abstruse. Phillip Graham's scene in Act III was an amazing achievement. One insincere inflection would have reduced the scheme to bathos. Miss Cain if slightly less

experienced approached the part with courage and a remarkable make-up which transformed her into a sophisticated woman of thirty-five. Their scene together was both moving and convincing.

Perhaps the elimination or cutting of some of the other characters would have given the author more elbow room with these two. This would have meant starting the play later and removing much of the subplot.

The production can scarcely be appreciated without knowing all the vicissitudes that must beset the producer. Realizing the many difficulties that occur in interpreting a new script, we must pay a special tribute to Cicely Deverill for the smoothness of the play. The set was charming and delightfully lit.

The only sure facts were (a) that it is to companies like the Wayfarers that the unknown playwright must look for production, and (b) that discussion on problems of conduct and theological truths raged among the audience for days after the production.—ED.

ALL THE REST

Liverpool. The Bishop's Players presented *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*.

This is their third tour in the Diocese, and their presentation of Christian drama is one of the activities of a Committee which the Bishop formed in 1945 to be his Advisory Committee on Religious Drama in the diocese. They have played in seven parishes this autumn.

The Committee is supported by a larger Drama Council, representative of every part of the Diocese, and it is the Bishop of Liverpool's wish that throughout his Diocese the best plays should be chosen, and that their presentation should be as finished as possible.

To this end, the Committee have organized lectures and schools on dramatic art and given advice and help to local companies of players.

Ipswich. The Rev. Brynley Jones writes in his parish magazine:

"The first Diocesan Religious Drama Festival held at St Matthew's on 7th and 8th November was attended by large and interested congregations, many of whom attended afterwards the adjudication in the Church Hall. Miss Carina Robins, indisposed and not really fit to travel, had taken the precaution of bringing a deputy with her in the person of Mr Richard Ashton, and he it was who adjudicated as Miss Robins was confined to her room at Miss Wontner's. Five groups of players presented plays of varying quality and each group agreed that the Festival had been eminently worth while if only for the wise and sympathetic adjudication which has put us all on our mettle for the next Festival. Already Churches from other parts of the Diocese have expressed their desire to present a play on the next occasion. On the final night mention was made of the excellent work put in by Mr John Moore of Clarkson Street as Hon. Secretary of the Festival. Dozens of others were "implicated" also and it would be beyond us to mention every person who so willingly helped to make the Festival the success it obviously was."

Mr Jones himself is to be congratulated on being the motive force behind the Festival, and for stirring up such R.D. enthusiasm. His own production of *I Will Arise* deserves special praise.

New Addington Parish Church. *A Play of All Good Things.* The Rev. B. T. Page writes:

I think I ought first of all to commend the play itself, the dialogue is easy but good, there is sufficient action, the costumes present no difficulties (except perhaps for the birds and beasts), and the teaching of the play is obvious and clearly

expressed yet thought-provoking. In short, it is a good play for the beginner with quite small children and few resources.

We managed to squeeze about 135 people into our army hut—a record attendance in the three years it has now been in use. We sang Evensong in the usual way up to the end of the third collect (part of my object was to get the children to be present at one of the church's ordinary services).

We then pulled the curtains in front of the sanctuary and did the little scene shifting necessary whilst a hymn was being sung. Entries and exits were down the church from the back, except for the sally into the garden when we used an entrance to the side of the sanctuary. The choir remained in their places throughout, there was no special stage and no special lighting. For the final scene the curtains were drawn back, and the play finished with the whole congregation singing the final hymn, after which I gave the blessing from the altar (it had seemed most easy and suitable for me to take the part of Stephen).

I hardly need to attempt a criticism of our performance. The main fault (and I have suffered from this sort of thing before in more ambitious dramatic work) was incomplete synchronization between actors and choir due to inadequate rehearsal. Costuming we left to parents: a risky thing to do, but they managed very well, and it let us out of all expense. In fact the production cost us precisely 5/-, which was the fee charged, and the collection taken during the final hymn netted some £2 for the Sunday School fund.

I am anxious to keep the children going with simple dramatic work and shall be interested to hear of what there is available.

Bristol. The Guild of Cathedral Players

In presenting the three-act play *Cyprian* by Freda Collins, the Guild of Cathedral Players were striving to underline a statement which they felt to be particularly appropriate at this time, namely "the blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church." From the very beginning of rehearsals they had many obstacles to overcome. The cast needed was a large one, and this together with "staggered holidays" prevented full rehearsals until September. Then three weeks before the production one of the chief characters was unexpectedly called up for National Service. And always at the back of the mind was the usual worry, that the Cathedral is a very difficult place to act in.

However, on the nights of October 11th, 12th and 13th, the players triumphantly overcame the many difficulties and proved yet again how well these players are adapting themselves to their environment. They gave a most vigorous representation of this story of the Third Century Church during the Roman persecution.

This was a difficult play to produce and the Guild are to be congratulated on the vividness and sincerity of their effort. They would be the first to acknowledge the debt they owe to many good friends: the Cathedral organist for his continued help and advice, and members of the Cathedral for gifts of material and money. Most of all do they appreciate the continued kindly support and encouragement from the Dean and Chapter. There can be few places in England where a group of young players are given ungrudgingly the "freedom of the Cathedral".

The Guild hopes to visit churches in the Diocese with a Passion play, during Lent 1951.

Keston Hall, nr Bromley. 1st and 2nd December, 1950.

Gates of Hell, the C.M.S. Anniversary play by Joyce Biddell, is now well-known in several parts of the country, but although I had read the play, I had not until now seen it performed. At Bromley, therefore, I was not making a comparison with any previous production, and was able to judge it entirely on its own merits.

Clearly the cast (except for two or three individuals) had little, if any, previous acting experience, and Lawrence Peat, as producer, is to be congratulated on the way in which he moulded his players into a team. The production was by no means excellent technically; slow cues and a lack of variation in pace, tone and movement, tending to make the play drag, were defects which should have been

remedied even with the most inexperienced players. In spite of this the play did *live*; not through good acting, but by the sincerity and conviction of those taking part. The theme of the play really came over, and no audience could fail to see its challenge. This was an ambitious production to tackle, but although it had many faults it was a real success, and the group should carry on their good work. A word of praise to that devilish caretaker—he was most convincing.

R.A.

Broad Green, West Croydon.

The Broad Green Fellowship Players, report a very successful production of *Then Will She Return* by Lesbia Scott. Having first produced the play in Croydon, in May of this year, they had the opportunity of presenting the play on five other occasions, covering the districts of Croydon, Addiscombe, Horsham, Shirley and Wallington.

This play very aptly described as "a Play on the Church's Destiny" proved to be a very real and unusual way of passing on the Christian message.

St Mark's, South Norwood.

Holy Family by R. H. Ward was presented in the Stanley Halls on 6th December, and in the London Central Y.M.C.A. on the 10th. Production was by the Reverend Douglas Remington.

This is a play of movement and moods. These players excelled in the movement, but fell down in the interpretation of mood. The production held moments of beauty, brilliance even, and supreme appeal, yet, particularly in the full-chorus work, nearly always there was reversion to the monotone. The producer must be able to control the mood of his play as a conductor controls an orchestra in the different movements of a symphony. The producer's disadvantage is that he must impart his interpretation during rehearsal and cannot stand in front and conduct each performance. In so many amateur productions all the rehearsal time is used in learning to play the right notes, and interpretation has to take its chance at the dress rehearsal: so here.

By contemporary standards this production was well above the average for amateur R.D. companies, and the lighting, clever use of modern dress, and full and proper use of incidental music, were all well planned and executed. Our aim must be perfection however, and to make *Holy Family* a really compelling piece of dramatic worship, there must be infinite variation throughout its presentation.

R.A.

Lamberhurst, Kent. December 5th and 6th, 1950. *The Prince of Peace* by Vera Peareth.

This play was produced by the author, whose work as a writer and producer of Religious Drama though hitherto unknown in these parts is well-known in the Bristol diocese. Written in the simplest language, and played almost entirely by the people of the village, it was presented as an Act of Worship and an experience in which the audience could and did share.

We are accustomed to seeing a beautiful slender medieval Virgin with a lovely voice, in Nativity Plays elsewhere; here we had the simple village maiden who was chosen to be the Mother of God's only Son, and her beauty was a spiritual one, which shone in her face, as, after the Annunciation, she cried, "O God, let it come true!"

I felt the personal note, and the sense of being a part of it all, throughout the play, but never more strongly than in the scenes of the shepherds' and the children's Adoration: here indeed was Love overflowing, the love of the young shepherd, Ben, as he looked down at the Child in the Manger, and reminded of the new-born lamb they had been tending on the hills, called Him "The Lamb of God"—the love of the children of Bethlehem, whose eager voices called to one another, "Come! Come! Come to the stable! Jesus is born!" and who could hardly wait to come and worship. No one who saw it will soon forget watching

those children coming to the stable, two by two, hand in hand, their little faces alight with awe, reverence, and love, as they peeped at the Baby Jesus lying in the manger, then knelt to sing their little carol and to worship Him: they were accepting this great experience in their own way and seeing the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay in very truth.

At the close of the play Joseph led the Mother and Child "out into the world" through the audience, and this to me was the culmination of that sense of nearness I had felt throughout.

I would compare this play with the Passion Play at Oberammergau, which I saw many years ago, for here, too, it was the offering of the whole village, not merely a certain section of the population, written for the people, in the language of the people, and here, too, we feel that we are not onlookers at a magnificent spectacle, but experiencing personally, in our hearts the knowledge that "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son."

ELINOR POWELL

Eastbourne. St Elizabeth's Church.

Carina Robins writes :

The Acts of St Peter by Gordon Bottomley is a most ambitious choice for any parish. Originally written for a Festival production in Exeter Cathedral, it demands a great deal from producer and cast. St Elizabeth's, which presented this play on December 3rd and 4th, is fortunate in having an experienced producer and group of players, but this was their first attempt at a church production, and they are not yet at their ease in verse speaking or in the technique of acting in church where the acoustics are a grave handicap. Thus the production was robbed of some vitality and variety of mood; nevertheless, a remarkably smooth and dignified performance was achieved and the interest well sustained, and one hopes to see more religious plays given by this parish.

Madingley.

The adult parishioners of Madingley village gave two performances of the Christmas story in Tableaux linked by carols and readings from the Gospels. The entire simplicity of the performance in the small and beautiful church was very moving and the producer should feel happy that a caste of such sincerity can be found in a village comprising only fifty houses.

K.B.

R. D. S. NOTES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Meeting, which was well attended, took place in The Watergate Theatre on November 17th 1950, with Mr Leonard Crainford in the chair. After preliminaries the Society heard reports from Mr Martin Browne, Chairman of Executive, Miss Carina Robins, Travelling Adviser, and Mr Richard Ashton, Acting Secretary.

This year, the 21st of the Society's life, membership stands at 1,500 as against 500 at the end of the war. Mr Browne, announcing this happy fact, paid tribute to the memory of Jim Bartholomew and his tireless work as Secretary, and to the equally devoted service of the Travelling Adviser, Librarians, and Office staff. He asked Mrs Martin Browne to speak about Miss Robins' recent production at Huddersfield (of which details are given in *News*). He referred to the criticism which had been voiced earlier at the Regional Meeting, about *Christian Drama*, and allowed the Editor to make a further appeal for help in the provision of "simple" informative articles for beginners. The Chairman continued: "We need to show people the kind of thing at which the Society aims. R.D.S. has been entrusted with the care of all R.D. work in London in connection with the Festival

of Britain 1951. Christopher Fry has promised to write us a play, and Michael MacOwan will produce it and the Festival Church will open with it in May. Afterwards it will tour churches and cathedrals in the provinces. There will also be a play by Mrs Baxter in Southwark Cathedral entitled *Your Trumpets, Angels!* with music by C. le Fleming. And P. Keily's production of R. H. Ward's *Holy Family* will also come to London. There should also be other interesting developments for 1951. We should gain valuable experience by the Festival Company's work although they will not be the permanent R.D. Company which we hope will be formed soon.

All these things depend on two vital factors. First, the financial situation. I must record our appreciation of the generosity of S.P.C.K. Secondly, the finding of a permanent secretary. Members' prayers and also practical help are asked in these matters."

The Travelling Adviser then gave a resumé of her work, speaking of the financial soundness of the 1949 York School, held in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, and explaining how the financial success of this School had helped the less satisfactory financial result of the Chichester 1950 School.

The Acting Secretary reported on the Library work which has increased very considerably during the year, drew members' attention to the Weekend of Prayer to be held on February 23rd/25th 1951 with the Provost of Southwark as conductor, asked those who wanted the Christopher Fry play in their area to get in touch with the office about it soon, and gave interesting details of the formation in Australia of a Religious Drama Society on similar lines to our own.

The Chairman after expressing the thanks of the Society to Mr Ashton for the unselfish and steady help he had given to the Society all through the last year, asked for opinions about the proposal put forward in the last issue of *Christian Drama* to establish bursaries to the summer schools as a memorial to Jim Bartholomew. Mr Jason Wright endorsed the idea and gave reasons. The Rev. D. Remington felt that it would be better for the memorial to take the form of a permanent R.D. Company to show members good religious drama and so make them want to come to the schools. Mrs Pattison Muir asked whether the second suggestion was in fact practicable, on the score of expense. It was agreed to refer the matter to the Executive Committee.

The Chairman then invited three Regional Representatives to give short reports.

Miss Kelly's report appears elsewhere in this issue. Mr Atfield (Secretary to Bishop of Liverpool's Advisory Committee on Religious Drama) gave a most interesting account of a survey of dramatic activities in the diocese which revealed that out of 230 parishes, over 60 were actively engaged in Religious Drama, and the remainder usually "did something" during the year. They had formed their own touring company and had, through their Committee, 40 parishes affiliated to R.D.S. The difficulties, as ever, were finance and transport, but members received the impression that the Bishop's Players would triumph over all these.

Miss Hart, speaking briefly for Miss Barton, Secretary of the Religious Drama Fellowship for the Diocese of Salisbury, gave Members a picture of some of the problems involved in covering an immense area of scattered and impoverished parishes. Her optimism was infectious, and her determination to raise the standard in the teeth of all complacency most heartening.

After tea, members saw a performance of Charles William's *House by the Stable* performed by the Rev. Douglas Remington's group of young players—an interesting effort, showing once again the value of choosing a good play, though the performance showed some signs of strain due to having been rehearsed earlier in the year for domestic reasons.

After the Play, the Council met to transact business, but to its great regret time did not allow of the Policy discussion noted on the Agenda, and it was therefore agreed that the Councillors should meet again on the afternoon of February 23rd (before the Quiet Weekend) at 2.30 p.m. at S.P.C.K. House.

LIBRARY

New Plays.

**And it Came to Pass*. Twelve Mimes of the Old Testament. J. G. MARASH. Drawings by GWENDOLINE PERKINS. (French, 4/-.) Excellent for class work and provides useful material for public presentation. Fee on each, 7/6.)

**Led By a Star*. JESSIE POWELL. (National Society/S.P.C.K., 1/9.) A Nativity Play in three Parts. Advent: *Angels of Preparation*; Christmas: *The House of Bread*; Epiphany: *Kings' Pages*. Variable cast, doubling possible. Any two parts may be done together if the whole is too long. The events are mainly seen through the eyes of children. (Fee, 7/6 for whole, 5/- for one or two parts, no charge for use in classroom.)

Plays in Typescript.

**The Cornish Play of the Death of Adam*. Translated and adapted for Broadcasting by TERENCE TILLER. Cast of 8. Very fine. Recommended for groups with enterprise. (Fee, apply T. Tiller, Broadcasting House.)

**Easter Scenes*. Arranged for a small church. H. M. RICHARDS. Reader, 3 m., 4 w., 2 Archangels, one or more Server Angels. 20-30 mins. The sanctuary represents the Inner Tomb, the chancel, the Outer Tomb. The church with its Easter decorations suggests the Garden. (Fee, .)

**Silent Witness*. MARIE JEAFFRESON. Large cast, doubling possible. 6 scenes in the life of St John the Baptist. The action is continuous and is revealed to Zacharias in a series of visions in the Temple at Jerusalem. Written for performance in the Church of St John the Baptist, East Malling. (Fee, £1; 15/-.)

* Indicates on Recommended List.

Reference Library.

Books and Material for School and Youth Drama (Theatre in Education Series). JOAN M. COLLINS. (Dobson 2/6.) Contains a useful list of Religious Plays and Reference Books.

The Development of African Drama for Education and Evangelism JOHN TAYLOR in *International Review of Missions*, July 1950. (Edinburgh House Press. 3/6.)

Design for the Theatre. REX WHISTLER. (Batsford, 8/6.)

Also received:

If Any Man. D. T. IZZETT. (Epworth Press. 1/-.)

Son of Profit. J. WEATHERSPOON. (Epworth Press. 6d.)

STOP PRESS.—As we go to press we are happy to add that the Society has secured as secretary Mr W. Williams to whom we extend a warm welcome.